

Inhotim exhibits works by Mestre Didi and Mônica Ventura

As part of the 2023 artistic program, two new exhibitions are opening at Inhotim featuring matters of ancestry and religiosity among Afro-Indigenous peoples

Brumadinho, Minas Gerais – Instituto Inhotim is opening two temporary exhibitions on Saturday, May 27, at Galeria Praça. **Mestre Didi - “os iniciados no mistério não morrem” [Mestre Didi - “The Initiated Into The Mystery Do Not Die”]**, curated by guest curator Igor Simões, along with Inhotim’s curatorial team, and **A noite suspensa ou o que posso aprender com o silêncio [The Suspended Night Or What I Can Learn From The Silence]**, by Mônica Ventura; they have a dialogue with matters of ancestry and religiosity among Afro-Indigenous peoples. The exhibitions are sponsored by Shell, at the Master level, through the Federal Law of Incentive to Culture.

A noite suspensa ou o que posso aprender com o silêncio was commissioned by Inhotim to occupy the central space of Galeria Praça, one of the most visited galleries in the museum and botanical garden. The work stands out, at first glance, for its scale: it is approximately 4 meters high and 9 meters wide. Mônica Ventura (São Paulo, 1985) presents as a proposal to look at the surroundings and the local power, making use of the soil from the area in the construction of the work – the wall, the base and the sculpture are made of this material. *A noite suspensa ou o que posso aprender com o silêncio* is of a scale that is not human and at the same time is not architecture, yet it confronts us. The proposal is to contemplate this installation which looks at us. “Who is observing whom?” asks the artist.



Mônica Ventura. Credit: Renato Mangolin



[image gallery for dissemination](#)

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In this work, Mônica Ventura alludes to different religious practices of ancestral matrices, and the public is invited to unveil the layers of the installation, whose form is associated with the *zangbetos*, ancestral spirits worshipped in some religions in the Gulf of Benin, responsible for the protection and warding off evil, and also with the *praiás*, fundamental elements of Pankararu cosmology, an originary Brazilian people whose traditional territory is near the São Francisco River. For the Pankararu, the *praiás* mark the presence of the Encantados (the Enchanted), living entities directly linked to the spiritual plane. Both are manifested through dance and the use of a type of full-body mask made of straw. In both cases whoever occupies that body remains unknown; they observe but cannot be observed.

Like an enclosure made of straw, the installation has a blue colored dome and its earth base affixed to the floor resembles a Yoni, a shape that alludes to the feminine and whose meaning in Sanskrit refers to the notions of “divine passage” or “source of life”. The sculpture itself refers to the Lingam, a phallic symbol that refers to the masculine. The combination of the two forms, seen from above, refers to Shiva Lingam, the synthesis of the energies of the universe. “The central part of Galeria Praça is an extremely challenging space to work with. It is not a white cube, but it is not an outdoor area either. And Mônica sought a composition that articulates and mobilizes both the architectural space and the surrounding garden”, explains Lucas Menezes, Inhotim assistant curator.

Entering the multiple universe of Deoscoredes Maximiliano dos Santos (1917-2013), Mestre Didi (Master Didi), the exhibition *Mestre Didi - The Initiated Into The Mystery Do Not Die* shows about 30 works by the artist, made in accordance with his Candomblé religious leadership activity and belonging to the Instituto Inhotim Collection. Its title, according to guest curator Igor Simões, is an excerpt from a song sung during the funeral ceremonies of an Ojé, priest of the Egungun tradition. By and large, the exhibited works are made out of dendzeiro palm tree fibers, shells, beads, seeds and leather strips, with the presence of symbols that refer to Yoruba traditions.

“As part of its programming, Instituto Inhotim has exhibited its recent acquisitions, focusing on production of Black authorship. The works of Mestre Didi included in the exhibition ratify the mission of the institution to share this production with the general public, always in dialogue with the discussions featuring in the art field”, says Inhotim assistant curator Deri Andrade.

The exhibition invites the public to learn about other dimensions of Mestre Didi, especially in terms of Brazilian culture. In addition to his work in the cultural field, Mestre Didi was a supreme priest - also known as Alápini - of the Egungun ancestors worship, having founded in the city of Salvador, in 1980, the Sociedade Religiosa e Cultural Ilê Asipá (Ilê Asipá Religious and Cultural Society). In the exhibition, all these experiences in Mestre Didi's trajectory – intellectuality, spirituality and the sacred - are recorded. There are also sculptures from the collection of Sociedade de Estudos da Cultura Negra no Brasil (Society for the Study of Black Culture in Brazil) (SECNEB), and a series of documents and images kindly provided by singer and dancer Inaicyrá Falcão, one of Mestre Didi's daughters. Another aspect addressed in the show is the presence of women in the artist's trajectory.

“The mysteries of Mestre Didi originate in the pieces and extend to his various existences as Alápini, writer, translator, educator, intellectual and his inseparable presence from the maintenance of the knowledge that united the waters of the Atlantic in the Afrodiasporic experience, which goes beyond the limits of country and expands into a domain that goes beyond the territorial,” says curator Igor Simões. *Mestre Didi - The Initiated Into the Mystery Do Not Die* also features some works that relate to the work of the artist such as Rubem Valentim and Ayrson Heráclito, with the video art *Ijó Mimó* (2019), as well as commissions from Ilê Asipá, which was in dialogue with the curatorship from the beginning of the research which took place on trips to Salvador.



◀ Mestre Didi, *EYE NLA AGBA, Grande Pássaro Ancestral*, 1980s.
Credit: Instituto Inhotim



[image gallery for dissemination](#)

For Glauco Paiva, executive manager of Communication and Social Responsibility at Shell Brazil, “At Shell, our pillars for cultural sponsorship are diversity and inclusion as central attributes. Supporting Inhotim and, especially, the exhibitions that evoke the protagonism of Afro-Indigenous peoples in our culture, strengthen our commitment to build and consolidate these pillars together with Brazilian society.” It's noteworthy that the company currently ranks second among the largest cultural sponsors in the country through incentivized funding.

Mestre Didi - “os iniciados no mistério não morrem” [*Mestre Didi - “The Initiated Into The Mystery Do Not Die”*] and *A noite suspensa ou o que posso aprender com o silêncio* [*The Suspended Night Or What I Can Learn From The Silence*] are part of the **Programa Abdias Nascimento e o Museu de Arte Negra [Abdias Nascimento and the Black Art Museum Program]**. At the invitation of the curatorship of Instituto Inhotim, Igor Simões will author, besides this exhibition by Mestre Didi, a set of curatorships at the institution still in 2023, integrated into the Abdias Nascimento and the Black Art Museum Program.

About Mônica Ventura

Mônica Ventura was born in 1985 in São Paulo, where she lives and works. She is a visual artist and designer with a bachelor's degree in Industrial Design from Fundação Armando Alvares Penteado (FAAP), São Paulo. She is also a master's student in Visual Poetics (PPGAV) at ECA-USP, São Paulo. Currently, she researches philosophies and constructive processes of pre-colonial architecture and crafts (African Continent - Amerindian Peoples - Vedic Philosophy). She uses this research to produce artistic practices created from personal experiences. Her works talk about the feminine and raciality in narratives that seek to understand the psychosocial complexity of Afro descendant women inserted in different contexts. A Black woman, she steers her body memory by rubbing it against her ancestry through stories of her life and research. Her artistic production also leads her body to occupy spaces that are socially closed off. In her works there is a special interest in Afro-Amerindian cosmology and cosmogony beyond the use of their objects, symbols and rituals.

About Mestre Didi

Deoscoredes Maximiliano dos Santos (Salvador, Bahia, 1917-2013), better known as Mestre Didi (Master Didi), was a priest-artist, son of Arsênio dos Santos, a great tailor from the state of Bahia, and Maria Bibiana do Espírito Santo, known as Mãe Senhora (Lady Mother) for her role as Ialorixá in the Ilê Axé Opô Afonjá terreiro, in the city of Salvador. Didi began executing ritual objects associated with Candomblé in his childhood, maintaining this practice throughout his life. At the same time, he was initiated into the religion at the age of eight, delving into the worship of the Egunguns (or Ancestors), an essential part of the Nagô culture of Yoruba origin. In his pieces there are fibers of the dendezeiro palm tree, beads, shells, leather strips, emblems of the orishas Nanã, Obaluayê, and Oxumarê reintroduced in the semantic field of art and, as such, stretching practices that do not always fit into the word. Between the 1940s and 1990s, Mestre Didi positioned himself as an Afro-Atlantic intellectual, and his production includes translations from Yoruba to Portuguese, choreographic plays, short stories and writings that position him as an indispensable figure in the custody and diffusion of the knowledge of the African diaspora, not only in Brazil, but between the Americas and Europe. In 1966, he traveled to West Africa to conduct comparative research between Brazil and Africa, hired by UNESCO. In 1980, he founded and presided over Sociedade Cultural e Religiosa Ilê Asipá (Ilê Asipá Cultural and Religious Society) of the worship of Egun ancestors in Salvador. He was coordinator of the Conselho Religioso do Instituto Nacional da Tradição e Cultura Afro-Brasileira (Religious Council of the National Institute of Afro-Brazilian Tradition and Culture), representing in the country the Conferência Internacional da Tradição dos Orixás e Cultura (International Conference of the Tradition of Orixás and Culture). Mestre Didi held important solo and group exhibitions at institutions such as Pinacoteca do Estado de São Paulo, Museu Afro Brasil, Museu de Arte Moderna de São Paulo, Museu Oscar Niemeyer, Museu de Arte Moderna da Bahia, Museu Histórico Nacional and Museu de Arte Moderna do Rio de Janeiro, in addition to participating in the Bahia Biennial and the 23rd São Paulo Biennial. Internationally, he exhibited in Valencia, Milan, Frankfurt, London, Paris, Accra, Dakar, Miami, New York and Washington. His works feature in prominent collections, including Museu de Arte Moderna da Bahia, Museu de Arte Moderna de São Paulo, and Museu de Arte de São Paulo Assis Chateaubriand.

About the Abdias Nascimento and the Black Art Museum Program

Poet, writer, playwright, visual artist, curator, university professor, pan-Africanist, politician, the trajectory of Abdias Nascimento (1914-2011) followed activism and the struggle against racism. Among his many achievements, Nascimento led two important initiatives: Teatro Experimental do Negro (Black Experimental Theater) (TEN) (1944-1968) and Museu de Arte Negra (Black Art Museum) (MAN) (1950). The former was an entity focused on the practice of Black dramaturgy. He turned theatrical activity into a medium capable of influencing a new generation of Black citizens through racial awareness, criticism of European ethnocentrism and valorization of African cultural heritage. The Black Art Museum, a pioneering initiative at the time, brought together works by national and international artists with the mission of disseminating African influence in Western modern art and representing the plurality of artistic production of the Black diaspora.

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In 2021, the year that marked ten years since the loss of this important Brazilian intellectual, Inhotim invited Instituto de Pesquisas e Estudos Afro-Brasileiros (Institute for Afro-Brazilian Research and Studies) (IPEAFRO) for a joint action: occupy Galeria Mata, until 2024, with the Black Art Museum collection. Abdias Nascimento and Elisa Larkin Nascimento created IPEAFRO in 1981, with the mission of safeguarding the artistic and documentary collection of Abdias and the organizations he founded. With the aim of addressing the multiple legacies of Abdias Nascimento and the fundamental issues that his work and his thought raise, Inhotim hosts another museum within itself, putting into perspective the notions of museum, collections and the networks of coexistence in which they are immersed. The series of exhibitions Abdias Nascimento and the Museum of Black Art highlights the permanence of this legacy. The project unfolds in four acts, drawing on the Black Art Museum collection and IPEAFRO documentary collection. *Sortilégio [Sortilege]*, the third act of the project, focuses on Abdias' production as a painter, and the centrality gained by Afrodiasporic religions in his production. With the TEN's activities in decline, as a consequence of the country's political situation with the establishment of the Civil-Military Dictatorship in 1964, the intellectual faced difficulties to make his ideas resonate. Also in 1968, by recommendation of Judith Gleason, a researcher specializing in African culture, Nascimento earned a two-month grant, awarded by the Fairfield Foundation, to meet with Black artists, intellectuals and activists of the United States. In Brazil, the promulgation of Institutional Act No. 5 forced Abdias into exile, who spends 13 years between the US and Nigeria. The third act focuses in this period, the years of Abdias' exile, where most of his paintings were produced, and MAN's collection gained strength and grew with works by artists from the networks of contacts he made throughout his travels through different countries to promote the unity of African peoples across the world.

About Igor Simões

PhD in Visual Arts-History, Theory and Criticism of Art-PPGAV-UFRGS. Adjunct Professor of History, Theory and Criticism of Art and Methodology and Practice of Art Teaching (UERGS). He was assistant curator of Bienal 12 (Mercosur Biennial - Educational Curator). Member of the curatorial committee of Associação Nacional de Pesquisadores em Artes Plásticas (National Association of Researchers in Plastic Arts) - ANPAP, Member of the UERGS-MARGS Educational Center. Member of the collection committee of Museu de Arte do RS-MARGS. He works with the interrelations between exhibition, film montage, art histories and racialization in Brazilian art and visibility of Black subjects in the visual arts. Author of the thesis *Montagem Fílmica e exposição: Vozes Negras no Cubo Branco da Arte Brasileira [Film Montage and Exhibition: Black Voices in the White Cube of Brazilian Art]*. Member of the research group Flume Educação e Artes Visuais (Flume Education and Visual Arts). He has carried out activities in the area of education and debate on Brazilian art and racialization in institutions such as Museu de Arte de São Paulo (Masp), Instituto Itaú Cultural, Instituto Moreira Salles, MAC/ USP-Museu de Arte Contemporânea da Universidade de São Paulo, as well as universities in Brazil and abroad. Member of the curatorial committee of the Museu de Arte Contemporânea of USP. He was assistant curator at the 12th edition of the Mercosur Biennial and curator of the exhibition *Presença Negra [Black Presence]* at Museu de Arte do Rio Grande do Sul. He was on the curatorial board of the exhibitions: Social Fabric (Houston, Dallas); Empowerment (Volfsburg, Germany). Board member of AWARE - Archives of Women Artists, Research and Exhibitions (France- USA), Fractured Times (MAC-USP). Currently, he is general curator of Dos Brasis: Arte e pensamento negro, at SESC Belenzinho and guest curator at Inhotim for the 2023 season in the Abdias Nascimento and the Black Art Museum Program. He is currently a postdoctoral candidate in Art History at MAC-USP, fellowship at Clark Institut.

About Shell Brazil

In the country for 110 years, Shell is an integrated energy company with participation in Upstream, in the New Natural Gas Market, Trading, Research & Development and in the Development of Renewable Energy, with a trading business in the free market and environmental products, Shell Energy Brazil. Here, fuel distribution is managed by the joint venture Raízen, which recently also acquired Shell Brazil's lubricants business. The company works to meet the growing demand for energy in an economically, environmentally and socially responsible way, evaluating trends and scenarios to respond to the challenge of the future of energy.

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EXHIBITIONS

Mestre Didi - “os iniciados no mistério não morrem” [Mestre Didi - “The Initiated Into The Mystery Do Not Die”]

A noite suspensa ou o que posso aprender com o silêncio [The Suspended Night Or What I Can Learn From The Silence]

Opening: Saturday, May 27, 2023

Location: Galeria Praça (G3), Instituto Inhotim

VISIT US

Visiting Hours: Wednesday to Friday, from 9:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.; Saturdays, Sundays and holidays, from 9:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.

Admission: R\$ 50 whole (half off for students with ID, seniors over 60 years old and their partners). Children up to 5 years old do not pay admission.

Location: Inhotim is located in the city of Brumadinho, 60 km from the city of Belo Horizonte, capital city of the state of Minas Gerais (a trip of approximately 1 hour and 15 minutes). Access through federal highway BR-381 at km 500 – direction Belo Horizonte/São Paulo It is also possible to get to Inhotim through federal highway BR-040 (a trip of approximately 1 hour and 30 minutes from Belo Horizonte). Access through BR-040 - direction Belo Horizonte/Rio de Janeiro, at the Retiro do Chale exit.

Transportation options:

Shuttle – Belvitur, Inhotim's official tourism and events agency, offers transportation on Saturdays, Sundays and holidays, departing from the Holiday Inn Belo Horizonte Savassi hotel (Rua Professor Moraes, 600, Funcionários, Belo Horizonte). You must be there 15 minutes before boarding time and voucher verification. See more information about the shuttle [by clicking here](#). Saritur Bus – departs from Belo Horizonte Bus Station from Tuesday to Sunday, at 8: 15 a.m. and returns at 4: 30 p.m. during the week; 5: 30 pm on weekends and holidays. R\$ 51.75 (one way), R\$ 46.05 (return), R\$ 97.80 (round trip).

Inhotim Design Store

The Inhotim store, located at the entrance of the Institute, offers decoration items, utilitarian objects, books, toys, ceramic pieces, vases, plants and typical regional food products, in addition to the institutional line of the Park. Products are also available for purchase on the [online store](#).

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